



June 2014

# Driver Ed News

## The Issues Around Newly Licensed Drivers

Vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for teenagers in America. Nearly 3,000 teens die annually in such crashes, according to the most recent data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Two major areas contribute to this alarming statistic: 1) inexperience of young drivers and 2) issues surrounding distracted and impaired driving. Both of these issues need to be addressed in any reputable teen safe driving program.

## Ford Driving Skills for Life – A Safe Driving Solution

Ford Driving Skills for Life (Ford DSFL) was established in 2003 by Ford Motor Company Fund, the Governors Highway Safety Association, and a panel of safety experts to teach newly licensed teens the necessary skills for safe driving beyond what they learn in standard driver education programs.

The program is international in scope touching not only the United States but many areas around the world. The basic premise behind Ford Driving Skills for Life is to provide a step in the learning process, providing new skills and information not currently shared with newly licensed drivers in the basic driver education courses.

Training is conducted in both hands-on and web-based curriculum and the entire program is available at no cost. Training conducted under the Ford Driving Skills for Life program addresses both the inexperience factor as well as issues surrounding distracted driving. Results over the past ten years of this effort have been outstanding. For best results, we encourage both teens and parents to engage in the instruction together.

**[www.drivingskillsforlife.com](http://www.drivingskillsforlife.com)**



Thank You for the Outstanding Participation  
at the 2014 Idaho State Driver Education Conference

The Conference link is: **[Click Here for NNU CE Credit](#)**

Class will close June 20th

## Beginning drivers and crash risk

Getting a license is an important milestone for teens and parents, but being a beginning driver carries special risks. Per mile traveled, teenage drivers are more likely to be involved in a crash than all but the oldest adult drivers. During their first months of licensure, teens have a particularly high risk of crashing. One reason is inexperience. Another is immaturity.

When teenage drivers crash, the contributing factors are typically different than adult drivers' crashes. Characteristics of teens' fatal crashes include:

**Driver error.** Compared with adults' fatal crashes, those of teens more often involve driver error.

**Speeding.** Excessive speed is a factor in about a third of teens' fatal crashes.

**Single-vehicle crashes.** Many fatal crashes involve only the teen's vehicle. Typically these are high-speed crashes in which the teenage driver loses control.

**Passengers.** Teens' fatal crashes are more likely to occur when young passengers are riding with them. This risk increases with the addition of every passenger. Just over half of teen passenger deaths occur in crashes with teen drivers.

**Alcohol.** Teens are less likely than adults to drive after drinking alcohol, but their crash risk is substantially higher when they do. About 1 in 5 fatally injured teen drivers have blood alcohol concentrations of 0.08 percent or more.

**Night driving.** Per mile driven, the fatal crash rate of 16-19 year-olds is about 4 times as high at night as it is during the day.

**Low safety belt use.** Most teens that are killed in crashes aren't using their safety belts.

## What parents can do to help

**Don't rely solely on driver education.** High school driver education may be a convenient way to introduce teens to the mechanics of driving, but it doesn't produce safer drivers. Poor skills aren't always to blame for teen crashes. Teenagers' attitudes, experience and decision-making matter more. Young people tend to overestimate their skills and underestimate their vulnerabilities. Training and education don't change these tendencies. Peers are influential, but parents have much more influence than typically is credited to them.

**Know the law.** Become familiar with your state's restrictions on young drivers, and feel free to set tougher rules.

**Restrict night driving.** About 2 of 5 young drivers' fatal crashes occur between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m. The problem isn't just that driving in the dark requires more skill behind the wheel. Late outings tend to be recreational, and even teens that usually follow the rules can be easily distracted or encouraged to take risks. Consider setting an early curfew for your teen, even if your state has a later one.

**Restrict passengers.** Teenage passengers riding in a vehicle with a beginning driver can distract the driver and encourage greater risk-taking. While driving at night with passengers is particularly lethal, many of the fatal crashes involving teen passengers occur during the day. The best policy is to restrict teenage passengers, especially multiple teens, all the time.

**Supervise practice driving.** Take an active role in helping your teen learn to drive. Plan a series of practice sessions in a variety of situations, including night driving. Give beginners time to work up to challenges like driving in heavy traffic, on freeways, or in snow and rain.

**Require safety belt use.** Don't assume that your teen will buckle up when driving alone or out with peers. Insist on belts.

**Prohibit driving after drinking alcohol.** Make it clear that it's illegal and dangerous to drive after drinking alcohol or using any other drug.

**Consider a monitoring device.** Various types of in-vehicle devices are available to parents who want to monitor their teens' driving. These systems flag risky behavior such as speeding, sudden braking, abrupt acceleration and nonuse of belts. Research shows a monitoring device can reduce teens' risks behind the wheel. Some insurers offer discounts for using one.

**Choose vehicles with safety in mind.** Teens should drive vehicles that reduce their chances of crashing in the first place and protect them from injury in case they do crash.

**Be a role model.** New drivers learn a lot by example, so practice safe driving yourself. Teenagers who have crashes and violations often have parents with similar driving records.